Democratic decentralization and rural transformation: An analytical study of panchayati raj system in Jharkhand in special reference of Garhwa district

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Introduction:-

India has a long history of local governance, but it was Mahatma Gandhi who emphasized the role of rural panchayats as an important instrument of development and socio-political transformation of the society. These are Panchayati Raj Institutions who execute the rural development programmes in every state. The involvement of PRIs at the grassroot level is mainly intended to ensure people's participation in the development process of the rural areas. A historical examination of the evolution of Panchayati Raj Institutions reveals that the beginning of these institutions dates back to Rig Veda period i.e. 1200 B.C. Additionally, there is concrete proof that the village's Sabha, or council of assembly, and Gramins or senior citizens, existed up until roughly 600 B.C. During the Medieval and Mughal periods these village bodies had been the pivot of administration, the centre of social life and above all, a focus of social solidarity. However, the local self- government of the present day, in the sense of an accountable representative institution, is the creation of British Rule in India. These institutions were given the much-needed democratic framework by Lord Ripon's efforts in 1882 and the Mayo's Resolution in 1870. Panchayat Acts/Laws had been passed by eight provinces and six native states by 1926. However, these statutory panchayats covered only a few villages and had limited number of functions. The Government of India Act of 1935, and the establishment of provincial autonomy under it, marked another significant milestone in the history of panchayats in the country.

However, Gandhi set the tone of the nationalist position on panchayats by declaring that village panchayats would now be a live force in a unique way, and India would almost be enjoying self-government tailored to its needs. He defined his vision of village panchayats as a complete republic based on perfect democracy and individual freedom. The village panchayats were given a place in the Indian Constitution under Article 40 of the Directive Principles of State Policy. The article states, The State shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of local self-government. Following independence, the first

major Community Development Programme was established in 1952 with the goal of achieving comprehensive development in rural areas through people's participation. This program was designed to offer an administrative structure for the government to reach out to districts, tehsils, talukas, and villages. Later, in 1957, the Planning Commission created a team led by Balwantrai Mehta to study the Community Development Programmes and National Extension Services Programme, with the goal of assessing the amount of people's engagement and recommending strategies to ensure it. The committee recommended three-tier panchayati raj system in the country viz Zila Parishad at the District Level, Panchayat Samiti at the Block Level and Gram Panchayat at the Village Level. Though the committee did not establish a formal framework, the seeds were planted for the emergence of the modern Panchayati Raj. Subsequently, the Ashok Mehta Committee's 1977 recommendations for a two-tier system with Zilla Parishad at the district level and Mandal Panchayat as the base and Furthermore, the L. M. Singhvi Committee's 1986 suggestions that the PRIs should be incorporated in the Constitution and the 'Gram Sabha' be the basis for decentralised democracy, bore fruit in the form of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1993. This became a significant development in the history of local self-government. It established a three-tier Panchayati Raj structure across the nation and gave them the authority and powers they needed to carry out their role as self-governing entities.

Panchayati Raj was founded in India on the assumption that at the local level, there should be some form of democracy that involves people participation in the governance process. If the people are to be involved, they must be assigned roles in the operation of the government's institutions and development programs. This is the only way to bring democracy to the masses. The 28th state of India, Jharkhand, was established on November 15, 2000. Following its establishment as a separate state, Jharkhand passed the Panchayati Raj Act 2001 in compliance with the 73rd amendment to the Constitution. Article 243M of the constitution exempts the fifth schedule territories from the execution of Part XI of the constitution, stating that parliament may by law extend its provisions to the schedule and tribal areas. In 1996, Parliament passed the PESA Act, which extended Part XI of the Constitution with bound modifications and exceptions to the Fifth Schedule Areas notified in ten states: Andhra Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana and Jharkhand. The Gram Sabha was granted absolute powers under the PESA, whereas state legislature has given an advisory role to ensure the

proper functioning of Panchayats and Gram Sabhas. A higher level authority cannot limit the power assigned to the Gram Sabha, and there must be complete independence. The PESA is considered the backbone of tribal legislation in India; it recognises the traditional system of decision-making and advocates for the people's self-governance. The Gram Sabhas are endowed with the following powers and responsibilities: the right to compulsory consultation in land acquisition, resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced individuals, preservation of traditional beliefs and tribal culture, ownership of small forest products, settlement of local conflicts, avoidance of land alienation, management of village markets, control over production, distillation, and prohibition of alcohol, exercise of control over money-lending, and any other rights pertaining to the Scheduled Tribes. The Jharkhand government has partially implemented the PESA. Recently, a pilot initiative to enhance the general health of 28 panchayats and transform them into model panchayats was launched by the Panchayati Raj Department of the Jharkhand government. To identify gaps and enhance service delivery across the 28 panchayats, the department has partnered with the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), an independent organisation that works throughout Kerala to increase local governance capacity. According to officials, the purpose of the capacity building program is to get from KILA an ISO certification, which is equivalent to a panchayat's standards certificate. The accreditation would indicate, among other things, that the panchayat system is maintaining resident satisfaction with its service delivery and is attaining continuous improvement through interaction and evidence-based decision making.

LITERATURE REVIEW:-

a) Vinod Vyasulu, in his book, 'Panchayats, Democracy and Development' (2003), explores the ways as to which the 73rd Constitutional Amendment was being implemented. The book explores the manner which changes in PR are taking place in the Indian states today. It can provide scholars and practitioners several insights on how to further improve the status of local self- government.

b) G. Palanithurai in the volume 'New Panchayati Raj in Tamil Nadu (2003) provides State ·wise outlook of the devolution of powers. It aims at providing analysis of the performance of the institution in terms of the powers assigned to them. The whole process of the transformation has been captured in this work from the experiences of the provinces.

c) Dr. Kamble P. S. (2008) conducted a study titled "The Role of Village Panchayats in Kolhapur District's Rural Development," analysing the region's Village Panchayats' financial elements and coming to some important conclusions. The study found that while village panchayats are important actors in rural local governance, their reliance on grants slowed the rate at which rural development advanced. Interestingly, these Panchayats mainly disregarded investment and debt funding alternatives. The study revealed a disproportionately high expenditure on administrative matters, accounting for about 1.5% of their spending from grants. Moreover, the study emphasized the pivotal role of infrastructural development in influencing the economic growth of the area, with approximately one-third of their income being allocated to this purpose. Village Panchayats also endeavored to deliver health, medical, and social welfare services, allocating around 30% of their income for this cause. However, the analysis unveiled that only a marginal share, approximately 4%, was designated for street lighting, while education provision, primarily at the primary level, was insufficient. This indicated the necessity for increased expenditure in the education sector to meet the demands and enhance educational services provided by the Panchayats.

d) L.N. Sharma in an excellent case study "Panchayati Raj Institution" (1998), focused the importance of Panchayati Raj Institution in rural development. However, his review article emphasized the problems of

policy-planners, involves an elite classes and the causes of people's unemployment.

e) G. Palanthurai in his book entitled "The Genre of Women leaders in Local Bodies" (2001), focused that women secured important position 1n the local bodies through Panchayat system. His experience suggests some important method which helps the women leaders to perform the assigned role in a better way.

f) Chanchani's, M.A(2015) in his paper "Decentralization and Development: The Indian Experience" offers a comprehensive analysis of the emergence of Panchayati Raj in India and its significant influence on rural development. This comprehensive analysis highlights the various challenges encountered during the decentralisation process, providing insights into its intricacies. Additionally, the study delves deeply into the pivotal role that local leadership plays in propelling grassroots growth. It highlights the crucial role these community leaders play in promoting and supporting development at the local level, which has a big impact on the state of rural development as a whole.

g) Shivaramkrishanan N. (2002) highlights Mahatma Gandhi's unmatched dedication to rural development while discussing his opinions on village panchayats. Gandhi was notably dedicated to developing the first village as a model for broader societal progress. He firmly believed that without the upliftment of villages, national development would remain incomplete. The growing population in villages poses various critical challenges such as food, clothing, and shelter. Gandhi envisioned not just superficial changes in society but the establishment of an entirely new social order—a concept unique and unparalleled in the world's history. He advocated for compulsory education up to the basic level, emphasizing the principles of non-violence through satyagraha and non-cooperation as the guiding principles of village communities. Gandhi placed significant emphasis on village development, stressing the necessity for the Gram Sabha to maintain comprehensive records.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:-

Proposed research problem would analyse role and performance of Panchayati raj system in Jharkhand. In Jharkhand, despite the establishment of the Panchayati Raj system, several challenges persist. These include issues like inadequate funding and resources, lack of capacity building among elected representatives, political interference, and corruption. Additionally, there are challenges related to effective implementation of welfare schemes, particularly in remote and tribal areas. Limited access to education and awareness among the rural population also hampers the functioning of the system. Moreover, there are instances of social inequality and marginalization, which affect the participation of certain sections of society in the decision-making process within the Panchayati Raj institutions. Addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring the effective functioning and empowerment of local governance in Jharkhand. The relevance of research depends upon the selection of problem to be answered. These problem are as follows:-

1. There is lack of awareness among the elected Representative
2. Lack of adequate financial resources to act as local self government
3. Excessive administrative control of the state
4. Despite increased numerical strength, women representatives often struggle to exercise their power within PRIs.
5. Tribal governance systems are in the verge of extinct due lack of provisions in the panchayati raj institutions to safeguard them.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY AND MOTIVATION:-

The purpose of this research is to study reason behind the lack of awareness among the elected representatives and to know the constitutional status of Panchayati Raj institution in Jharkhand and policy if government related to it as well as to study the role of women in Panchayati Raj institution. Objectives of this research are following :-

1. To study the set-up of democratic decentralisation in Jharkhand, in the light of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act,1992:
    - ✓ Devolution of political, administrative and financial powers to PRIs.

- ✓ Representation of women, scheduled castes, and backward classes in PRIs and rural development.
- ✓ Existing administrative structure of Panchayati Raj, Jharkhand

2. To understand tribal governance system and need of PESA in this regard.
3. To study the functional aspects of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Garhwa district of Jharkhand.
4. To examine the working and implementation of ongoing rural development programmes.
5. To evaluate the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the implementation of rural development programmes.
6. To examine the role of women in PRI.
7. To study the relevant literature on Panchayati Raj and rural development.

HYPOTHESIS:-

a) PESA act is complimentary to the tribal governance system in Jharkhand.

b) The implementation of Panchayati Raj system transformed rural socio-economic condition.

c) The actual power of women representatives is exercised by proxy representation of their relatives.

RESEACH METHODOLOGY:-

In this proposed research historical, descriptive, analytical, investigative and library method of research would be applied in the scientific way to reach the conclusion. This proposed research would be based on both primary and secondary data. In the present research work Garhwa districts in Jharkhand were selected for study. Primary data will be collected from these this districts.

DATA COLLECTION:-

In the present research work Garhwa district in Jharkhand were selected for study. Primary data will be collected from this district. Source of second data would be reports, recommendations, books, magazines, newspapers, journals and internet would also be source of secondary data.

Relevence of the subject/Topic:-

The Panchayati raj institution is an important step in the decentralization of pawer and promotion of local self government. 73rd Act has been instrumental to reshape the structure and functioning of Panchayati Raj System in India through certain compulsory provisions. But the major thrust area of rural development is still noticed ignored mainly due to ineffective functioning of these institutions. Government of India as well as various states and U.T. Governments have been continuously endeavouring to empower the people through the PRIs. Every day at National Level and at State Level we notice a number of slogans directed towards strengthening these bodies. After the implementation of 73rd Amendment Act, various research studies have been conducted to evaluate the functioning of PRIs and their role in rural development in various parts of the country. But in Jharkhand such type of serious research studies, specifically, evaluating the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the implementation of rural development programmes could not take place after the introduction of 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 through Jharkhand Panchayati Raj Act, 2001. Hence, the present research study entitled " ***Democratic Decentralisation & Rural Transformation: An analytical Study of Panchayati Raj system in Jharkhand in special observance of Garhwa district*** " has been an endeavour towards the same.

Future Work:-

The research presented in this dissertation seems to have raised more questions that it has answered. There are several lines of research arising from this work should be pursued. There are various scope left for further research.

- The institutional set-up and working of the gram sabha.
- Fiscal federalism related to panchayati raj system in Jharkhand.
- Impact of PESA Act on tribal living in Jharkhand.
- Effects of the governmental initiative towards increase of women participation in democratic process.

Chapterisation:-

1. Democratic Decentralization and Panchayati Raj System in India
2. PESA and Panchayati raj system in Jharkhand
3. Rural transformation and PRI in Garhwa district
4. Status of women representation in Garhwa district
5. Evaluation of Panchayati raj system in Garhwa district
6. Conclusion: finding and suggestion

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